United Nations A/70/917

General Assembly

Distr.: General
6 June 2016

Original: English

Seventieth session
Agenda item 124
Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

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Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The report was prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/272. It is aimed at presenting as comprehensive an overview as possible of the ways in which the United Nations interacts with parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), as the world organization of national parliaments with an explicit mandate to provide a parliamentary dimension to the work of the United Nations. The report also provides a review of the work that the United Nations undertakes with regional parliamentary organizations and thematic networks of parliamentarians, many of which also formally engage with IPU. It covers the two years since the most recent report was issued (A/68/827) and presents the range of activities at the national, regional and global levels over the biennium 2014-2016.

16-09174 (E) 170616

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I. Introduction

1. There is a long and rich history of interaction and partnership between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). That comes from a recognition of the core functions of parliaments and parliamentary organizations and the added value and mutual benefits that those partnerships offer across a wide range of United Nations mandates and activities. In 2000, at the Millennium Summit, Heads of State and Government resolved to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and national parliaments through IPU. That paved the way for IPU to have permanent observer status at the General Assembly and a more structured relationship between it, the United Nations and parliaments.

2. National parliaments and parliamentarians typically have at least four key functions: legislative, budgetary, oversight and representation. They are empowered with the authority to pass legislation; they authorize resource mobilization through national budgets; and they oversee resource mobilization and allocation through national budgets. When they are inclusive, accountable and effective, parliaments represent the peoples whom they serve. Working with parliaments can help to bring the work of the United Nations closer to people from all segments of society and, conversely, their voices into the decision-making process at the national, regional and global levels.

3. IPU has worked with the United Nations system to play a vital role as a convener of national parliaments and other parliamentary organizations, to discuss and help to formulate parliamentary input to major United Nations processes. Alongside other parliamentary organizations and networks, IPU also cooperates with the United Nations on a number of activities that cover the same broad scope of work as the United Nations — from human rights to human health, gender equality, sustainable development, disaster risk reduction, peace and security and beyond. During the reporting period, IPU and other parliamentary organizations helped to bring the voices of people, through their parliamentarians, to the United Nations in the context of consultations on the post-2015 development agenda and to such bodies as the Human Rights Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Commission on the Status of Women and the World Health Assembly.

4. As a result of the growing realization of their key roles, recent landmark United Nations agreements have included explicit references to the role of parliaments. National parliaments are highlighted in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 70/1 on 25 September 2015, which underlines their "essential role". The 2030 Agenda also encourages Member States to "conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and subnational levels that are country-led and country-driven" and concludes that national parliaments can support those processes. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, adopted on 18 March 2015, highlights the role of parliamentarians and IPU in supporting and advocating disaster risk reduction and the strengthening of national legal frameworks. Parliamentarians and parliamentary organizations contributed to the preparatory work for both agreements and have committed themselves to supporting their implementation.

5. The present report provides a description of the work that the United Nations undertakes in support of national parliaments (sect. II), with IPU and other parliamentary organizations (sect. III), and to build these partnerships further (sect. IV). The conclusion (sect. V) includes recommendations.

II. United Nations and national parliaments: direct support to parliaments and parliamentarians

6. Numerous entities from the United Nations system have provided support to many national parliaments over the reporting period. In the present section, some of the main areas of interaction between the United Nations and parliaments are laid out thematically. It is not meant as an exhaustive list, but rather as indicative of the breadth and richness of the cooperation.

2030 Agenda and climate change

7. Parliamentarians will have an extremely important role to play in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. They will need to adopt or amend legislation, allocate a specific budget for implementation, exercise oversight over the executive branch for compliance and promote regional and international cooperation in support of implementation.

8. For parliaments to exercise their role, Governments will need to adapt the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals to their national circumstances. The Goals and their targets also need to be integrated into the legislation submitted to or developed by parliaments. That is already happening in the area of climate change: there has been a tremendous increase in the number of national laws and policies adopted alongside international agreements on climate change. A recent study of 98 countries and the European Union showed that there were 804 laws and policies relating to climate change at the end of 2014.[1]

9. The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals can build on the experience gained in the context of the Millennium Development Goals. That is already happening in some ways: as was the case for the Millennium Development Goals, some parliaments have created dedicated committees on the Sustainable Development Goals, raising awareness, engaging with civil society and promoting the continuity of work on them through election cycles. In Pakistan, for example, the National Assembly set up a Goals secretariat in 2016, with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Parliaments may also consider holding hearings on the Goals: for example, the International Development Committee of the Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has held hearings on integrating the Goals into development cooperation.

10. Parliaments are well placed to promote the holistic vision of the Sustainable Development Goals for the world. Indeed, they will need to help to ensure "whole of government" responses that extend beyond delineated socioeconomic areas, both nationally and internationally, in international assistance budgets and programming. The United Nations system is also required to work in a more integrated way across its pillars in support of that holistic agenda.

11. The national voluntary reviews of the high-level political forum on sustainable development will be critical to moving the Goals forward. Bearing in mind that those reviews are led by States and will be conducted within the framework of national institutional and legal arrangements, Governments could be well served by

[1] See Michael Nachmany and others, *The 2015 Global Climate Legislation Study: a Review of Climate Change Legislation in 99 countries* (Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and Environment, the Global Legislators Organisation and IPU, 2015).

engaging parliaments in the national reviews of the forum, which should be inclusive national processes.

12. Given that parliaments are key partners in sustainable development, the World Bank has systematically included consultations with parliamentarians in its preparations for country engagement strategies or country partnership frameworks. Regarding transparency and accountability as central to achieving its twin goals of ending extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity, the Bank has provided parliamentarians with free and open access to a comprehensive set of data on development in countries around the globe. That partnership has also been manifested through parliamentary conferences and workshops organized on the side-lines of the Bank and International Monetary Fund spring and annual meetings, bringing select parliamentarians to the Bank headquarters to engage with senior management from both institutions on pressing development issues.

Strengthening governance and parliamentary capacities

13. Parliaments play a pivotal role in delivering good governance, a prerequisite for development. Strengthening the capacities of national parliaments has therefore remained a priority for UNDP, the largest provider of technical assistance to parliaments worldwide, supporting one in three parliaments through some 70 current programmes. The UNDP parliamentary strengthening programming is part of its assistance for inclusive political processes, including support for elections, constitution-making processes, civic engagement and women's political participation and leadership. The programming focuses on building the capacity of parliamentarians and parliamentary committees on crucial sustainable development issues, including climate change, gender equality, HIV and AIDS and combating corruption. For example, in Bangladesh, India and Tunisia, UNDP, working with the parliamentary network Climate Parliament, has supported breakthrough renewable energy legislation and policies. In Chile, it supported the National Congress in promoting an integrity and anti-corruption agenda and the work of the bicameral commission on transparency of Congress. It has also worked with national parliaments to promote institutional reform through the development, implementation and evaluation of parliamentary strategic plans. In Bhutan, it has supported the development of strategic development plans by both the National Assembly and the National Council, as well as efforts to bring parliamentary work closer to the people, in particular through videoconferencing ("Virtual Zumdu"). IPU has worked closely with UNDP country offices, providing technical assistance and capacity-building programmes to national parliaments in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Guinea-Bissau, Myanmar, Pakistan, Trinidad and Tobago and Tunisia.

14. UNDP has worked with parliaments to enhance the participation of women, young people and marginalized groups and to improve parliamentary communication and outreach activities so that people have greater opportunities to interact with their representatives. For example, it has contributed to strengthening the transparency, inclusion and representation of parliaments by training civil society organizations on best practice in popular participation in parliamentary processes, such as in Fiji and Madagascar. In the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Chile, UNDP has worked with the national parliaments to enhance the representation and participation of minorities and indigenous peoples. Working with the parliaments of Georgia and Ukraine, it has supported the adoption of

parliamentary openness action plans to further accountability, transparency, access to information and popular engagement in legislative processes.

15. Newly elected parliamentarians in many parts of the world have benefited from UNDP training courses on topics ranging from standing orders to human rights, budget control, review of finance laws, decentralization and preparation of parliamentarians for their first sitting. Capacity-building has been conducted in numerous countries, including Myanmar, the Niger and Tunisia.

16. Strengthening the capacity of the parliaments of developing countries is also a key aim of the World Bank. Leadership, Learning and Innovation, the knowledge-sharing arm of the Bank, has strengthened the capacity of parliaments in developing countries through structured learning events, knowledge exchanges and support for parliamentary networks. Over the past 10 years, it has trained more than 10,000 parliamentarians in partnership with parliamentary organizations. Programmes have focused on the budget cycle, parliamentary administration and the role of parliaments in curbing corruption, poverty reduction and in conflict-affected countries.

International peace and security

17. Parliaments are key partners for the United Nations, including when a particular country is facing a lapse or relapse into violence, or is in the midst of a violent crisis. In countries where preventing conflict is the priority, parliaments are key interlocutors as the envoys and representatives of the Secretary-General, United Nations special political missions and the Department of Political Affairs support the good offices role of the Secretary-General and engage in preventive diplomacy and maintaining peace, including by supporting the strengthening of national institutions. Parliamentarians have a potentially invaluable role to play in conflict prevention when they have strong relationships with constituencies, are equipped to identify lingering and emerging grievances and provide a voice for people who may otherwise feel voiceless and be tempted to turn to violence. Similarly, parliamentary oversight of government, crucial to promoting good governance, helps to ensure that Governments address the underlying conflict drivers in societies, such as inequalities and discrimination. In recognition of that, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel has worked with national parliaments as part of its preventive diplomacy efforts and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa has liaised with presidents of national assemblies during the facilitation of peace and transition processes and during political crises.

18. In contexts of continuing conflict, the United Nations, through its peace operations and country teams, can provide direct material support to ensure that parliaments have the basic tools to function. In Somalia, UNDP has supported the National Federal Parliament, state parliaments and the Somaliland Parliament to establish infrastructure (construction of an adequate security perimeter and office space) and fund strategically important running costs (communications and the Internet). Beyond material support, the United Nations has provided technical assistance, such as advice and training, often on key or particularly sensitive themes. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, with support from Headquarters, has provided expert advice on issues such as the division of power between the most senior offices and the roles and responsibilities of key federal institutions. Conflict contexts do not mean that United Nations assistance to

parliaments is limited to material or short-term support. In Afghanistan, UNDP has supported the parliament in its long-term institutional development by helping the various secretariats to generate a set of comprehensive recommendations aimed at improving the structures, processes and performance of the parliament.

19. Throughout all that work, cooperation with parliaments has provided excellent opportunities to advance the women and peace and security agenda. For example, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan has assisted the Commission for Women of the lower house to push through the adoption of a law on the elimination of violence against women, while the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) have supported the establishment of a national network of women in the national parliament and the adoption by the parliament of the Canchungo Declaration of October 2014, which is aimed at raising awareness among national authorities of the need to adopt strategies for greater participation by women in politics and decision-making processes.

20. In terms of combating corruption, crime prevention and criminal justice, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has offered technical support in legislative processes by providing comments and submissions to draft bills on combating corruption, crime prevention and criminal justice. For example, the Nigerian parliament invited UNODC to make written and oral submissions during the public hearing of a public complaints commission bill in September 2014.

21. Parliaments also play a key role in the prevention of terrorism. In that regard, UNODC and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate have worked to raise awareness of the prominent role of parliamentarians in countering terrorism and violent extremism. UNODC has also supported parliamentary committees in the ratification of international conventions and protocols and their incorporation into national legislation, and works with parliamentarians to identify gaps in national legal frameworks and provide recommendations for the refinement of those laws.

Human rights

22. Human rights require legal protection and parliaments have a responsibility to enshrine those rights in national laws and ensure that the laws passed are compatible with human rights standards. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has worked with national parliaments in three main ways: by providing technical assistance, building capacity and undertaking advocacy initiatives. OHCHR has also played a strategic role in facilitating cooperation with civil society organizations and other key partners. Thematically, its work with national parliaments has typically included women's rights and gender issues, discrimination, the rights of indigenous peoples, natural resources and land management, military justice, transitional justice and the rights of victims. A key engagement has been advising parliaments on their role in preparing for examination by human rights mechanisms and in following up on their recommendations.

23. The work that OHCHR has undertaken with national parliaments spans the globe. Since 2014, it has worked with the National Assembly of Madagascar to establish a working group to coordinate responses to human rights violations and threats. That led the President of the Assembly to commit himself to creating a

human rights commission within the Assembly and he also appointed a human rights adviser in his office in 2014. In Georgia, in response to a request by the Chair of the legal committee of the parliament in 2015, OHCHR supported research on models of legal capacity of persons with disabilities and supported the process of finalization of the amendments package to the existing legislation relating to the legal capacity of persons with psychological disabilities. The amendments were passed in 2015.

24. Although the modalities for the universal periodic review did not foresee a formal role for parliamentarians, such a role does exist. Some 60 to 70 per cent of recommendations emanating from the review require parliaments to pass laws, ratify international human rights instruments, or oversee government action. In the framework of commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Human Rights Council, and in accordance with its resolution 30/14, the Council decided to convene a panel discussion in June 2016 to take stock of the contribution of parliaments to the work of the Council and the universal periodic review, and to identify ways to further enhance the interaction of parliaments with the Council and its mechanisms.

25. UNDP has also worked with national parliaments on human right issues. In Madagascar and Viet Nam, it helped to strengthen parliamentary capacity to review and adopt laws, in accordance with the recommendations of the universal periodic review. In Iraq, it helped to establish the first human rights civil society advisory board for the parliament, which includes 19 members of civil society organizations, including minorities, and represents all parts of Iraq. In Kyrgyzstan, it helped to implement and monitor courthouse accessibility, in compliance with the law on the rights and guarantees of persons with disabilities.

Gender equality and women's empowerment

26. Women's empowerment, including fair access to the political sphere as elected representatives in parliaments and the passing of laws and budgets that promote and address gender-specific priorities, will make a crucial contribution to the 2030 Agenda. UN-Women has supported 30 parliaments in becoming more gender-sensitive through targeted support to women's caucuses and gender equality committees. In Liberia, it launched the "HeForShe campaign", currently endorsed by the entire leadership of the national legislature, to promote a conducive environment for women's participation in parliament. In Ecuador, technical support to the parliamentary group for women's rights was provided to ensure harmonization of national legislation with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. UN-Women has built the capacities of elected women leaders through targeted training in 34 countries. In Malawi, it supported the establishment of a parliamentary women's caucus and provided training on negotiation skills for legal reform processes. In Afghanistan, it built the capacities of women parliamentarians to influence legal reforms, including laws on local government, public health and the family. In Algeria, the women's caucus successfully promoted gender equality provisions in the amended Constitution, including parity at all levels in public spheres.

27. Gender is at the core of UNDP work with parliaments and includes building the capacities of female aspirants, candidates, newly elected female parliamentarians and cross-party women's caucuses, and supporting the engagement of women's groups in

parliamentary processes, including law-making and budgeting. In the United Republic of Tanzania, the training of women parliamentarians and the creation of a women's parliamentary caucus contributed to an increase in the number of women participating in budget discussions from 13 in the 2013/14 budget session to 23 in the 2014/15 budget session. In Colombia, UNDP has supported efforts to enshrine the principles of parity, alternation and the universality of women's political participation in the Constitution. In the Republic of Moldova, it supported a gender audit of the parliament, the development of a parliamentary gender action plan and the establishment of a cross-party caucus of women parliamentarians.

28. Working with national parliaments on the issue of child marriage is a priority for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). In 2014, it supported the parliament of Bangladesh in the adoption of a bill on the prevention of child marriage, which sets the minimum age of marriage for men at 21 years and for women at 18 years. In the same year, UNFPA worked with parliamentarians from Costa Rica as they presented a draft bill to raise the age of consent from 16 to 18 years. In 2015, the Chadian parliament approved a law against child marriage and the National Assembly of Ecuador revised the Civil Code, raising to 18 years the minimum age for civil marriage under article 83. In 2016, Zimbabwe, in an effort to prevent child marriage, passed a historic law that set the legal age of marriage at 18 years for everyone.

Health

29. Parliaments have a key role to play in relation to policy, law and the financing of government action on health. The World Health Organization (WHO) has provided technical support to parliaments for developing and implementing health-related multilateral agreements, declarations and other legislative tools. In Samoa, WHO provided technical support to the work of the Samoan Parliament Advocacy Group on Healthy Living and the WHO Regional Office for the Americas helped Suriname to embrace a "health in all policies" approach, after the National Assembly was briefed on creating better social conditions for health, in particular among the most vulnerable populations.

30. UNFPA has worked with several national parliaments to adopt, enact or review laws on harmful practices such as female genital mutilation, and to advocate universal access to sexual and reproductive health services. Thanks in part to UNFPA support, in the Gambia the President declared a ban on female genital mutilation in 2015, following the passing of a law in the parliament prohibiting the practice. In 2016, the Thai parliament adopted a bill on the prevention of and remedial measures for adolescent pregnancy, stipulating that young people between 10 and 19 years of age must be given access to reproductive health information and services, including comprehensive sex education.

31. UN-Women has worked to build alliances with parliamentarians in addressing the gender dimensions of HIV and AIDS. In Côte d'Ivoire, it supported the creation of a network of parliamentarians in the fight against HIV and AIDS and built the capacity of 50 parliamentarians, helping to develop a three-year plan for the network, which includes specific actions to address the intersections of gender-based violence and HIV. In Malawi, UN-Women engaged with the 32-member parliamentary women's caucus, which advocated the adoption of a marriage, divorce and family relations bill. The new law increases the age of marriage from 16 to 18 years.

III. United Nations, IPU and other parliamentary organizations: advancing global norms

32. As the world organization of parliaments, IPU plays a leading role in promoting the engagement of parliaments in United Nations processes and activities. To help to guide the partnership between the two organizations, IPU has established an internal committee, the Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs, which serves as a forum to ensure regular interaction between the United Nations and the parliamentary community, review implementation of major international commitments and shape parliamentary input to United Nations processes. UNDP regularly takes part in and provides support for the meetings of the Committee. At the 134th IPU Assembly, held in Zambia in 2016, the Committee decided that it would review progress on the Sustainable Development Goals annually, in preparation for each high-level political forum. Beyond IPU, the United Nations works with a range of parliamentary organizations and networks at the regional level (for example, the Latin American Parliament (Parlatino) and the European Parliament), organized around a theme (for example, with the Global Organization of Parliamentarians against Corruption or the Climate Parliament), or along cultural/linguistic lines (for example, with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the International Assembly of the French-speaking World).

33. The present section provides an overview of the main thematic areas around which the work of the United Nations with parliamentary organizations, including IPU, has been organized over the biennium 2014-2016.

2030 Agenda and climate change

34. IPU and other parliamentary organizations have played an important role in raising awareness of, and mobilizing political support among parliamentarians for, the Sustainable Development Goals and the closely related area of climate change. In the declaration made at the fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, held in New York in 2015, a strong pledge to implement the Goals was made. To build political momentum ahead of the landmark twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Paris in December 2015, the Secretary-General of IPU, at the invitation of the Executive Secretary of the secretariat of the Convention, addressed letters to 14 national parliaments urging them to speed up ratification of the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol. IPU and the French parliament organized a parliamentary meeting during the conference, which helped to galvanize political will for strong action on climate change in follow-up to the agreement.

35. One of the most pressing challenges for the recently adopted 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on climate change is to launch them successfully at the national and regional levels, ensuring Member State ownership of the processes. Parliamentary organizations provide support and tools to assist parliaments in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement. In that vein, delegates at the 132nd IPU Assembly, held in Viet Nam in 2015, agreed on the Hanoi Declaration, committing parliaments to translating the Goals into enforceable laws at the national level. At its 134th Assembly, IPU adopted an action plan to guide parliaments in responding to the Paris Agreement, along with the Goals and the Sendai Framework. The plan, developed with contributions from various United Nations entities, launched a comprehensive review of existing national legislative

responses to ensure consistency with international agreements. One expected outcome is that parliaments should, by the end of 2017, where appropriate, put forward any amendments to existing legislation and develop new legislation, to ensure that their legislative bases are consistent with the Paris Agreement.

36. The work in the run-up to and since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement has been significant and has involved a wide range of United Nations and parliamentary actors. UNDP and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association held an international parliamentary conference on sustainability, energy and development in March 2016 in London. The United Nations Environment Programme has partnered with parliamentary organizations as diverse as Parlatino and the Global Legislators Organisation, a group devoted to addressing legislative challenges to sustainable development. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization has worked extensively with the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean on sustainable energy, development, food security and the private sector in development. Moving forward, it will be necessary to strengthen the partnerships between the United Nations and parliamentary organizations to advance the implementation of those ambitious, cornerstone multilateral agreements.

International peace and security

37. The most effective way to advance treaties that underpin fundamental global norms on international peace and security, such as in the area of the regulation of conventional arms and weapons of mass destruction, is universal participation and rigorous implementation. In both respects, parliamentarians and parliamentary organizations are essential. Through information exchanges, outreach activities and capacity-building opportunities, the Office for Disarmament Affairs has collaborated with parliamentary groups, such as Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Parliamentarians for Global Action. In February 2016, as a first step to closer cooperation with IPU, the Office supported IPU and the parliament of Côte d'Ivoire to organize a parliamentary seminar aimed at encouraging African parliaments to promote the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). The follow-up to the seminar is expected to be conducted at the 135th IPU Assembly and beyond.

38. Similarly, within the framework of Security Council resolution 2178 (2014), by which the Council condemned violent extremism and underscored the need to address the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate has established a partnership with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean. Mediterranean States continue to be affected by the threat of foreign terrorist fighters: several are countries of origin, transit or destination, or are located close to the conflict zones in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. The dialogue between the Executive Directorate and the Assembly has been conducted in close cooperation with the Office for Disarmament Affairs. More broadly, the Executive Directorate has worked closely with IPU, the Assembly and other parliamentary interlocutors to raise awareness among parliamentarians of the terrorist threat and of the requirements of relevant United Nations resolutions. In the same vein, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) worked with the European Parliament to hold a hearing in 2015 on the prevention of radicalization in the European Union.

39. Partnerships with parliamentary organizations have tended to focus on cross-cutting thematic issues, but they can also focus on specific cases or conflicts. In servicing the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Department of Political Affairs has engaged with national and regional parliaments and parliamentary organizations throughout the world, in particular as they called upon their Governments to recognize the State of Palestine. Parliamentarians and parliamentary organizations have taken an active part in the international conferences and quarterly seminars held under the auspices of the Committee in support of the two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to raise awareness of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Marking the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People in 2014, the Department organized the United Nations International Meeting of Parliamentarians in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace on the theme of the role of parliamentarians in ensuring respect for international law.

Human rights

40. Enhancing the contribution of parliaments to the work of the Human Rights Council and its universal periodic review was a priority for OHCHR and IPU during the reporting period, based on a partnership formalized in 2014. With the support and collaboration of OHCHR, IPU held four regional parliamentary seminars, in Morocco, the Philippines, Romania and Uruguay, in 2014 and 2015 to familiarize parliamentarians with the Council and the universal periodic review. The good practice discussed at the regional seminars were presented at a side event during the twenty-ninth session of the Council, in June 2015, and a compilation of the good practice gathered in the course of the regional seminars will be released in 2016.

41. On the issues of protection of refugees and ending statelessness, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and IPU have partnered to build parliamentary awareness and action. For example, in November 2015 they organized a global conference for parliamentarians on nationality and statelessness, in cooperation with the parliament of South Africa. The conference adopted a plan of action for parliamentarians in support of the UNHCR campaign to end statelessness by 2024. UNHCR and IPU have also produced a new version of a handbook for parliamentarians on nationality and statelessness.

42. Beyond ensuring the ratification of treaties and holding Governments accountable for their human rights obligations, parliaments can also alert Governments to nascent tensions or react to indicators of escalation to prevent crises that might lead to violence. The Special Advisers to the Secretary-General for the Prevention of Genocide and for the Responsibility to Protect have worked with parliaments to strengthen that function. In 2015 and 2016, the Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect met the Chairs and delegations of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament and its Subcommittee on Human Rights to discuss the follow-up to the recommendation of the European Parliament of 18 April 2013 on the position of the European Union on the responsibility to protect. In November 2015, the two Special Advisers, the Forum of Parliaments of Member States of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the parliament of Kenya organized a seminar for parliamentarians on the implementation of the Protocol on the Prevention and the Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity and All Forms of Discrimination adopted by the Conference. The Office on the Prevention of Genocide also provided support

relating to the prevention of atrocity crimes for a network of parliamentarians of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations with responsibilities for human rights issues.

Gender equality and women's empowerment

43. Adopting and strengthening sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls was established as a key means of implementation under Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, with obvious ramifications for parliaments. In that vein, UN-Women and IPU have continued and strengthened their collaboration. They convened an annual parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the fifty-ninth and sixtieth sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women, in 2015 and 2016 respectively. The meeting held during the fifty-ninth session was dedicated to the 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and during the sixtieth session the meeting was focused on key forms of discrimination in laws that hamper the sustainable development agenda.

44. In commemoration of the 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, UN-Women spearheaded a year-long campaign to renew commitment to the implementation of the Platform and its goals. In February 2015 in Santiago, UN-Women and the Government of Chile co-organized a high-level meeting for global leaders as part of the campaign. The Secretary-General joined Heads of State, ministers, parliamentarians, other senior United Nations officials, the Secretary-General of IPU and other leaders in signing a call to action to close remaining gaps and implement the 12 critical areas of the Platform for Action.

45. During the 132nd IPU Assembly, in 2015, senior officials from UN-Women discussed the links between the 20-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda, and the role of parliaments in effecting change and overseeing implementation. A joint IPU and UN-Women side event on the role of male parliamentarians in promoting and ensuring respect for women's rights served as a forum for male parliamentarians to join the UN-Women "HeForShe" campaign.

46. During the reporting period, several United Nations entities collaborated with the Women in Parliaments Global Forum. UN-Women and UNDP organized joint side events with the Forum on thematic topics, including lessons learned from the 20-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Recognizing that the rights of women can often be overlooked in a disaster context and that women tend to be categorized as vulnerable, rather than as potential responders and agents of change for risk reduction, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction established a partnership with the Forum, launching the first caucus of women in parliament for disaster risk reduction, committed to implementing the Sendai Framework, along with the education, health, poverty reduction and other goals of the 2030 Agenda. In addition, senior United Nations officials have taken part in the annual summits of the Forum.

Health

47. Health continues to be a major area of collaboration between the United Nations and parliamentary organizations. WHO and IPU have worked together on HIV and AIDS, maternal, newborn and child health, and the Ebola outbreak. Building on the IPU resolution on access to health as a basic right of 2012, WHO supported a study reviewing progress in its implementation, which was presented at the 132nd IPU Assembly. At the 134th Assembly, in 2016, IPU committed itself to aligning its resolution of 2012 with the Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health, launched during the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda. WHO offices have collaborated extensively with parliamentary organizations at the regional level; for example, the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific has begun working with the Asia-Pacific Parliamentarian Forum on Global Health, which was founded in 2015 as an association of national parliamentary health committees. A core component of that collaboration is to enforce and expand the rule of law in health governance.

48. Parliamentarians are vital to the full implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and to its successful integration into the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. In April 2014, at the sixth International Parliamentarians' Conference on the Implementation of the Programme of Action, organized by UNFPA in Sweden, parliamentarians from around the world commemorated the twentieth anniversary of the Conference and renewed their commitment to its agenda. The next International Parliamentarians' Conference will be held in 2017 and present an opportunity for parliamentarians to review the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals to date.

49. UNFPA has also partnered with parliamentary organizations around the world to strengthen legislation on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. It has worked with parliamentarians from the countries of the Southern African Development Community, the East African Community and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development to review laws and policies relating to adolescents and their sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, and to develop a legal framework for harmonizing laws and policies. In 2014, UNFPA collaborated with the Interparliamentary Assembly of the States Members of the Commonwealth of Independent States in developing a model law on reproductive health for those countries.

50. In July 2014, IPU and UNDP, in cooperation with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), held a parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the twentieth International AIDS Conference to provide parliamentarians with a forum for an exchange of views on major issues affecting the response to AIDS and to launch a joint handbook for parliamentarians on HIV and AIDS.

Other areas of collaboration

51. Cooperation between the United Nations and parliamentary organizations covers a wide range of areas beyond those described above. The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations has consistently engaged with parliamentary bodies in carrying out its mandate to improve cross-cultural relations between diverse nations and communities. IPU was a regular contributor to the Group of Friends meetings of

the Alliance, especially at the ministerial level, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean has regularly attended global forums and other major events organized by the Alliance.

52. The Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth and the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development have established close collaboration with IPU through its Forum of Young Parliamentarians and have attended the annual IPU conferences of young parliamentarians throughout the reporting period. Young parliamentarians have taken an active part in United Nations youth events, including the Youth Forums of the Economic and Social Council in 2015 and 2016 and the Global Forum on Youth Peace and Security. IPU monitors and provides data and information on the participation of young people in parliaments to international agencies working for the promotion of youth participation.

53. UNESCO has worked closely with several parliamentary organizations, including the International Assembly of the French-speaking World, the Pan-African Parliament and the European Parliament, on a range of issues, including the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expression, freedom of expression and of the press and the protection of cultural heritage, including in conflict zones. In the area of science, technology and innovation, UNESCO supported the participation of a number of parliamentarians in the seventh World Science Forum, organized by UNESCO and its partners in Budapest in November 2015.

54. The World Trade Organization (WTO) has maintained an open dialogue with parliamentarians and parliamentary organizations. The Parliamentary Conference on WTO, organized jointly by IPU and the European Parliament, is a case in point. Sessions are organized each year and on the occasion of WTO ministerial conferences. In 2015, the Parliamentary Conference expressed strong support for the multilateral trading system. In an outcome document, parliamentarians from around the world called for prompt ratification of the Trade Facilitation Agreement, a redoubling of efforts to conclude the Doha Round and a permanent solution to the issue of public stockholding for food security purposes. Staff of the WTO secretariat arranged briefing sessions for parliamentarians, working with organizations such as Parlatino, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the International Assembly of the French-speaking World.

55. The Department of Public Information global network of United Nations information centres has worked regularly with parliamentary organizations and parliamentarians to highlight the work of the United Nations across a range of themes, from sustainable development to gender equality and the empowerment of women, human rights and international peace and security. In the lead-up to the seventieth session of the General Assembly, IPU and the Department worked together to produce a display for the general public on the role of parliaments in connection with the outcomes of the 2030 Agenda.

IV. Partnerships

56. The present section provides a description of how the interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and parliamentary organizations is being systematized, including through regular senior-level interactions and the convening of specialized meetings. Tools and knowledge products that have been developed for and with parliamentary partners are also reviewed.

Senior level interactions and specialized meetings

57. Parliamentary organizations have continued their engagement in various United Nations meetings, from the General Assembly to the Economic and Social Council, the Human Rights Council and beyond. For example, the Secretary-General of IPU and other IPU representatives have taken part in various segments, meetings and discussions of the Economic and Social Council throughout the biennium. For the integration segment of the Council, held in May 2016 on the theme of implementing the 2030 Agenda through policy innovation and integration, IPU mobilized parliamentary representatives to take part in panel discussions. Parliamentary organizations also supported the participation of parliamentarians in the panels and debates of the high-level political forum on sustainable development — IPU in 2014 and the Women in Parliament Global Forum in 2015. Noting the relevance of its collaboration with parliamentarians, WHO held an event with IPU during the World Health Assembly in May 2016, to discuss the role of parliamentarians in implementing the health-related Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health.

58. Conversely, senior United Nations officials have regularly taken part in the meetings of parliamentary organizations. The Secretary-General delivered remarks at the fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament and senior United Nations officials have taken part in annual joint IPU-United Nations parliamentary hearings. Several senior United Nations officials took part in the 132nd, 133rd and 134th IPU Assemblies.

59. The pattern of increasing collaboration in the context of formal meetings has also held true with parliamentary organizations other than IPU. The Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs took part in the tenth plenary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, held in March 2016 in Albania, to discuss the urgency of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the central role of parliaments in delivering it. In September 2015, the Director General of UNESCO took part in a high-level debate before the Committee on Culture and Education of the European Parliament on the theme of cultural diversity and strengthening cooperation on the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural goods. UN-Women and other United Nations entities regularly collaborate with the Women in Parliament Global Forum, taking part in annual summits of the Forum, as noted above. The Administrator of UNDP, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Deputy Executive Director of UN-Women and several other senior United Nations officials delivered keynote addresses to the Legislators Summit of the Global Legislators Organisation, held at the French National Assembly in the margins of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

60. The primary parliamentary interlocutor for the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund is the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Founded in 2000, the Network is an independent, non-governmental organization that provides a platform for more than 1,500 parliamentarians from member countries of the Bank and the Fund to advocate increased accountability and transparency in development cooperation. Through joint activities with organizations such as the Network, the Bank creates a platform for dialogue, information-sharing and development advocacy. The Bank has also

interacted with a number of other parliamentary organizations, as well as regional parliamentary bodies, such as the European Parliament and the Pan-African Parliament.

Tools and knowledge products

61. In carrying out an ambitious array of work in collaboration with parliaments and parliamentarians, the United Nations has several tools at its disposal. UNDP manages a parliamentary expert roster to ensure the swift deployment of high-quality experts at the request of a parliament. The Standby Team of Mediation Experts of the Department of Political Affairs is a roster of experts who can be deployed in support of conflict mediation and good offices efforts worldwide at very short notice. They have frequently been called upon to advise parliamentary leaders from across the political spectrum on important issues, such as power-sharing, constitution-making, natural resources and wealth-sharing, gender and inclusion.

62. The United Nations, often in collaboration with partners, has also developed several specialized web-based platforms. UN-Women, UNDP, IPU and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance have collaborated on the International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics, created in 2007.[2] UNDP, the World Bank, and other partners have collaborated to create AGORA, a portal for parliamentary development and its climate portal.[3] Online courses are also available from the portal, such as a course on induction for first-time parliamentarians.

63. Several knowledge products have also been developed and regularly updated. IPU provides a key global source of data on women's participation in parliament, which is used by United Nations agencies to shape policy orientation for parliamentary institutions to become more gender-inclusive. UN-Women and IPU publish a biannual map on women in politics, which aims to raise global awareness of the status of women in national parliaments and in the executive. In 2015, UNDP and IPU began work on a second global parliamentary report on the theme of "Parliament's power to hold government to account". UNDP, IPU and other partners have also developed a set of common principles for support to parliaments, launched during the 132nd IPU Assembly, in 2015, and UNDP and the Climate Parliament published a guide on renewable energy for parliamentarians in 2014. OHCHR and IPU, in partnership with the International Labour Organization, finalized a joint handbook on migration, human rights and governance in 2015. In 2014, a handbook for parliamentarians on implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was prepared by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNDP, OHCHR and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, in collaboration with IPU, and launched at the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, held on 22 and 23 September 2014. An IPU/UNAIDS parliamentary policy guide on fast-tracking HIV treatment was launched by the Secretary-General of IPU and the Executive Director of UNAIDS at the 133rd IPU Assembly, in 2015.

[2] Available from www.iknowpolitics.org.

[3] Available from www.agora-parl.org and www.agora.parl.org/climate.

V. Conclusion and recommendations

64. The present report can provide only a snapshot of the breadth and depth of interactions between the United Nations, national parliaments and parliamentary organizations at the country, regional and global levels over the last two years. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda has emerged as a clear, long-term shared priority for the continued partnership between the United Nations and the parliamentary community. The ambitious 2030 Agenda will put significant demands on public capacities and budgets for all institutions, including the United Nations, parliaments and parliamentary organizations. That will require scaled-up and more effective cooperation, as well as resources to build capacities.

65. Beyond the 2030 Agenda, other areas will require joint attention and implementation efforts going forward. They include the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement, both of which depend on well-crafted laws and legislation, along with monitoring and accountability. The capacity and will of parliamentarians is fundamental to understanding, implementing and overseeing government commitments.

66. The United Nations partnership with the parliamentary community will continue to grow and include challenges and opportunities that must be managed together. Three cases in point are described below.

67. First, the world is operating in a tight fiscal environment. Parliaments have oversight of official development assistance and other international financial commitments. The United Nations must do a better, more concerted job of working with parliamentarians to ensure that those financial assistance flows address not "just" pressing humanitarian and other emergencies, but also the underlying causes of poverty, gender inequality, environmental degradation and conflict, as directed in the 2030 Agenda. Parliaments can also help to ensure that moneys allocated for specific purposes are spent effectively, reassuring national constituencies that their dollars are well invested.

68. Second, given the natural turnover of parliamentarians following elections, the United Nations needs to continue its advocacy and regular engagement with parliamentarians to help to maintain support for key agreements and principles, including the 2030 Agenda. Parliaments are closer to civil society groups, including women's groups, youth organizations, networks and movements, voters and people from all segments of society. It is through that proximity that parliamentarians can promote greater understanding of the work of the United Nations in their respective constituencies. They can be powerful advocates for sustainable development, human rights, the peaceful resolution of conflicts, peacebuilding and other basic tenets of the work of the United Nations.

69. Third, there will inevitably be situations in which parliamentarians and their executive branches do not share the same views as the United Nations on specific values enshrined in the Charter or in international law. In the area of human rights and women's rights, divergent views will remain a recurring challenge in some cases. In others, political interests, for example following the party line irrespective of draft legislation going against international standards, may be prioritized, in spite of the efforts of the United Nations. Here, instead of retreat, increased engagement offers the way forward. The continuing discussion between the United Nations and IPU concerning the development of principles to assist parliaments to fulfil their

role in the protection and realization of human rights should be accelerated. Once adopted, the principles should form a solid basis to guide joint United Nations-IPU support to parliaments in the area of human rights.

70. Given the scope of the work that the United Nations carries out in partnership with national parliaments, IPU and other parliamentary organizations, a number of recommendations to strengthen that cooperation are in order.

71. **First, while always bearing in mind that the United Nations is governed by the executive branches of the world's Governments, Member States have, through a series of General Assembly resolutions, encouraged the growing involvement of parliamentarians and parliamentary organizations in the work of the United Nations. The work of IPU with the United Nations system to facilitate a parliamentary component to major United Nations processes, in particular through the annual joint parliamentary hearings, is to be welcomed. The growing practice of including legislators as members of national delegations to major United Nations meetings and events, as appropriate, could be pursued more systematically.**

72. **Second, in the light of the magnitude of the work carried out at the country level, United Nations country teams should develop a more structured and integrated manner of working with national parliaments, including by involving them in consultations on national development strategies. The United Nations should accord priority to developing such an approach, in close consultation with IPU and other parliamentary partners.**

73. **Third, the United Nations system should facilitate more South-South and triangular cooperation between parliaments and parliamentarians, including in cooperation with IPU and other parliamentary organizations and networks, especially in countries emerging from conflict and/or in transition to democracy. Building on the common principles for support to parliaments, the United Nations should work with multilateral partners, parliamentary organizations and networks and, in particular, draw on the unique expertise of IPU and its member parliaments to facilitate strengthened collaboration with civil society organizations, including women's groups, and to enhance efforts to further strengthen the capacities of parliaments to perform their legislative, oversight and representative functions. One important goal of that cooperation is to enable parliaments to be more involved in national development planning exercises and reviews of global commitments, including the 2030 Agenda.**

74. **Fourth, given the breadth and depth of interaction between the United Nations system and IPU, there should be regular exchanges between the senior leadership of the two organizations to build greater coherence in their work.**

75. **Continuous cooperation and enhanced engagement between United Nations entities and the global parliamentary community will be increasingly vital to implementing the shared global agenda. The General Assembly may wish to further explore the modalities of that cooperation and include the subject of interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and IPU as a separate item in the agenda of its seventy-second session.**